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C O N F I D E N T I A L BUDAPEST 000814

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR EUR/CE-JAMIE LAMORE

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [HU](#)
SUBJECT: ANTI-ROMA INCIDENTS CONTINUE THROUGH THE SUMMER

REF: A. A. BUDAPEST 731
[1](#)B. B. BUDAPEST 663
[1](#)C. C. BUDAPEST 673

Classified By: PolOff Ryan C. Leong, reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary. New Molotov cocktail attacks against Roma families and an anti-Roma cartoon in a satirical publication are two of the latest examples of an escalating trend of anti-Roma activities which, although carried out by only a small fraction of the population, have not triggered strong public condemnation. Expected welfare reform legislation this fall may further inflame spirits if it is perceived as unfairly targeting Roma citizens. End summary.

Two New Molotov Cocktail Attacks

[1](#)2. (U) On August 7, in the northeastern Hungarian village of Pircse (population approximately 1,900, of which approximately 700 are Roma), Molotov cocktails were thrown into the homes of two Roma families. The attackers were successful in throwing one of the Molotov cocktails through a window, and shot an elderly woman in the leg as she attempted to escape the resulting fire. There were no injuries reported from the attack on the second family.

[1](#)3. (U) According to news reports, local residents deny tensions exist between Roma and non-Roma communities in Pircse, and opine that the crimes may have been the result of the Roma families not paying debts incurred through loans from criminal money lenders.

[1](#)4. (U) Similar Molotov cocktail and shooting incidents against Roma families were reported earlier this year in other towns: Galgagyork and Patka (ref A) in June, and in Fadd in April. Police officials have not commented on whether the attacks are related nor officially labeled them as racist attacks. Viktoria Mohacsi, a Roma Hungarian Member of the European Parliament emphasizes that there are similar elements in the four cases and calls upon the police to investigate possible racist motivations behind the attacks.

[1](#)5. (U) The Chairman of the National Roma Self-Government Orban Kolompar believes that "far right radical ideology hides behind these recent life-threatening attacks." Similarly, MEP Mohacsi does not believe the crimes have economic roots, and argues that the police are "playing in tot he hands" of groups like the Magyar Garda by "ignoring racism as a motivation behind the four cases." The Police have forwarded investigation of the firearm-related cases (the Pircse and Galgagyork cases) to the National Investigative Office.

[1](#)6. (U) In response to the latest attack, Prime Minister Ferenc Gyurcsany called on the Justice Minister to explore ways to ensure a greater police presence in small villages, and requested a proposed plan by the end of the month.

17. (U) On August 2, the International Day of Remembrance of Roma Victims of the Holocaust, public officials and Roma leaders emphasized the increasing threat of Roma-targeted violence. Head of the Roma Civil Rights Foundation Aladar Horvath emphasized that "Roma fears are increased because the government is weak against the far right and the judiciary appear to be powerless."

Anti-Roma Cartoon Sparks Rebuke from Journalist Association

18. (U) Following the publication of an anti-Roma cartoon in the satirical illustrated paper "Moricka," the Roma Press Agency filed a complaint to the Association of Hungarian Journalists (MUOSZ). The cartoon depicts the Roma as unemployed law-breakers who terrorize hard-working non-Romas.

In response to the complaint, the Ethics Committee of MUOSZ expelled the editor-in-chief of the publication (which has a weekly circulation of about 45,000), and issued an official statement of apology on behalf of the journalist community. The Moricka editor maintains that the cartoon does not exceed the limits of freedom of the press, but critics counter that the cartoon may be considered illegal as inciting racial hatred. MUOSZ chairman points out that the cartoon "uses the style of 1930's and 1940's Nazi anti-Semitic propaganda."

19. (C) Comment: Despite government statements condemning anti-Roma attacks and MUOSZ's public apology, there is a growing pattern of anti-Roma incidents against which there is no real public outcry. Even if extremist sentiment is still limited to a small fraction of the public, the majority is largely silent. Temperatures may continue to rise this fall as the government proposes welfare reform measures which some Roma leaders insist is unfair and anti-Roma. The reform proposal is expected to include work or training requirements for some public assistance recipients, but many Roma believe the measure will unfairly impact Roma citizens, who have few opportunities for meaningful employment because of pervasive workplace discrimination against Roma in Hungary (ref B). In addition, public demonstrations by the Magyar Garda (ref C) are increasingly being met by Roma counter-demonstrators (most recently at a Magyar Garda recruiting event in the small town of Barcs) who oppose the group's nationalistic, anti-Roma message. Although the competing demonstrations have thus far remained peaceful, growing tensions may increase the potential for direct confrontation. End comment.
Levine